

# Carer's Factsheet

my healthy way

## Headline facts about carers

- The most recent Census (2021) found that there are **5.8 million unpaid carers in the UK.**
- **1.7 million people in the UK are providing 50 or more hours of care per week.**
- The Carers UK State of Caring 2025 survey found that **42% of carers said their physical health has suffered** as a result of caring, and **30% said their physical health was bad or very bad.** Three quarters **(74%) of carers said they had felt stressed or anxious**, and **40% feel depressed**. **35% of carers said their mental health was bad or very bad**.

## Our commitment to carers

At our core, we recognise that carers are the unsung backbone of our community, often prioritising the needs of others at the expense of their own wellbeing. As a dedicated health and wellbeing provider, we understand that "caring for the carer" is not just a gesture, it is a necessity. Physical activity and dedicated downtime are vital tools for managing the unique stresses of caregiving, helping to boost resilience, reduce burnout, and improve long-term health outcomes.



By providing accessible facilities and tailored support, we are committed to ensuring that those who give so much to others have the space, time, and resources to invest in themselves.

## Caring for yourself while caring for others

When you are caring for someone else, your day rarely follows a predictable rhythm and if it does, we can often find it means that our focus and energy is going towards the person we are caring for and not necessarily overselves.

It is really common for meals to get delayed or forgotten altogether, sleep is often interrupted, and most decisions are made around someone else's needs rather than your own. Over time, this creates a very specific kind of fatigue as well as lack of time. This is not just physical tiredness, but a sense of running slightly below where you need to be, most of the time.

What often gets missed is that this is not simply about being busy or stretched. Your body is being asked to operate under ongoing demand, with fewer opportunities to refuel and recover properly. That combination can start to affect energy, mood, concentration and resilience in ways that feel gradual, but very real.

The role of nutrition can be overlooked but is actually a real game changer when we want to think about caring for ourselves. The key here is to remember that this doesn't mean more stress or more things to add to your to-do list, but actually about often making some simple switches and boosters that can improve how you are feeling both physically and mentally.  So what can we improve? **We've put together some different areas that you can improve and practical ways to apply them:**

# Simple switches and boosters

## Keeping energy more consistent through the day

It's very common for carers to go long periods without eating, then rely on something quick once hunger becomes impossible to ignore. That pattern creates a cycle where energy rises briefly and then drops again, often quite sharply. You don't need structured meals or anything elaborate. What helps is having something within reach that combines a bit of protein with something more sustaining, so energy holds for longer rather than peaking and dipping.

That might look like yogurt with fruit, toast with eggs or peanut butter, a handful of nuts alongside something simple. The aim isn't perfection, just giving your body something to work with at regular intervals. If you are really struggling, you can opt for a good quality protein powder to sip during the morning as a way to refuel steadily if time is poor.

Try this:

For a quick pick-me-up: Yogurt with fruit, toast with eggs or peanut butter, a handful of nuts alongside something simple. The aim isn't perfection, just giving your body something to work with at regular intervals. If you are really struggling, you can opt for a good quality protein powder to sip during the morning as a way to refuel steadily if time is poor.

## Supporting your body through ongoing stress

Caring for someone often means your system is in a near-constant state of alertness, even if it doesn't feel dramatic on the surface. Over time, that increases the demand for certain nutrients that help regulate stress, support the nervous system and maintain mental clarity.

Magnesium, B vitamins and omega-3 fats are particularly important here, yet they're also the ones that tend to drop when eating becomes more reactive.

**Try this:**

Rather than overhauling everything, it's about weaving in small things where you can, adding nuts or seeds to what you're already eating, including some oily fish during the week if possible, or simply having meals that feel a bit more substantial and grounding.

## Focus on hydration

Low fluid intake often creeps in quietly. It doesn't always show up as thirst, but more as headaches, lower energy, or that slightly foggy feeling that's hard to pinpoint. In fact, many people don't realise but the first signs of dehydration are feeling fatigued. Keeping drinks visible and within easy reach tends to make more difference than trying to consciously "drink more." It becomes something that happens naturally rather than another thing to think about.

**Try this:**

Try to space out your fluid intake during the day - this helps to ensure optimal hydration rather than drinking it all at once which means the body will still go through patches in the day of being dehydrated.

## Caffeine

When sleep is broken or short, caffeine can feel essential. The difficulty is when it starts to replace food or extends too far into the day, which can then feed back into poorer sleep and more fragile energy the following day.

| Try this: |
| --- |
| There's no need to remove caffeine altogether, just being aware of how you are using it and whether it's supporting you or simply getting you through, will help. |

## Letting food be simple and repeatable

When capacity is low, complicated meals rarely happen. Having a few reliable options that require very little thought or preparation can take pressure off and make it easier to eat consistently.

This might be the same breakfast most days, a few go-to lunches, or simple combinations that you know you'll manage even on more demanding days. Repetition here is often a strength, not a limitation.

| Try this: |
| --- |
| The best approach is to try and ensure each meal contains all the nutrients we need - some protein, some complex carbohydrates, some good fats and then some fruits or vegetables to get your vitamins and minerals. |

## Remember

**Creating small moments will help your system settle.** Your body doesn't necessarily need long periods of rest to begin recovering, but it does benefit from brief moments where it isn't in constant output.

Sitting down to eat rather than standing, stepping outside for a few minutes of fresh air, or even just pausing between tasks can help bring things down slightly. These moments accumulate, even if they feel insignificant at the time.

Looking after yourself in this context is not about doing more. It's about quietly supporting the foundations so that you are not constantly running on empty.



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## Further support and resources

Physical activity is often the first thing to slide when your schedule is packed with caregiving duties, yet it is one of the most effective tools for maintaining your own resilience. Regular movement, whether it's a brisk walk, a short yoga flow, or active gardening, triggers the release of endorphins that naturally combat the high levels of cortisol associated with chronic stress.

Beyond the obvious physical benefits like improved sleep quality and cardiovascular health, exercise provides a vital "mental circuit break." It offers a rare window of time focused entirely on your own body and breath, helping to reduce feelings of burnout and providing the stamina needed to meet the daily demands of your caring role.

**We offer free access to our leisure facilities for carers. Find your local centre:**
www.leisurecentre.com

**Carers Trust** provides help for carers, offering access to a variety of resources and services tailored to your unique needs:
https://carers.org/

**NHS support** includes carer's assessments, support from local councils, respite care and help for young carers:
www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/

Download the **NHS's Practical Guide to Healthy Caring**:
www.england.nhs.uk/publication/a-practical-guide-to-healthy-caring

**My Healthy Way** offers a range of tips and resources to support a healthy lifestyle, visit:
www.myhealthyway.co.uk

**Find practical, personal and financial support** for unpaid carers:
www.carers-network.org.uk

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Please remember the information given in this leaflet is for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended to be medical advice, nor replace the advice of your GP or healthcare practitioner. **Always speak to your, GP or healthcare practitioner before making any major nutritional or physical activity changes.**